

As a woman who looks White and by most measure is White, um, I come from a background primarily of Southern Italians. I don't feel often -- the way my White friends feel in a room. Um, my mannerisms, the vocal inflections that are absent now, talking with my hands, loving through food, tying religion and culture intimately. All of these things that were tied to my identity as an Italian-American, and I did live in Italy for-for 3 years, though I was born in the States. All of those things are invisible to people when they look at me. And then -- I just feel left out sometimes. I don't know how to bridge that divide, because obviously I experience all the White privilege that one would expect, and you know that puts me in one bucket. But in my core, I feel very different. You know, this American food, American customs, they were all very strange to me, they were all very White to me, to be honest, and, uh, for a long time, I-I didn't identify with any of that until the point where I thought, well, maybe, this in this one context of being white I am not. And, it's hard to talk about. I've talked about it with my partner, but outside that group and some of my family, I don't bring it up. So this is the first time I'm doing that. Because it's hard to say. I don't want to take for granted the privilege that I have, but -- nor do I want to leave that culture behind me because it-it really did make me who I am, and I think I noticed it keenly, the difference that is, when I had a supervisor tell me to use my hands less and, you know, modulate my voice in a more -- I don't know-I don't know how to describe it, but in a more in a narrower range of pitches and-and spaced out differently, right, cuz we Italians we like to talk and the-their pitch goes up and down and then we run words into each other and that's how we talk. And sometimes people are talking and then we respond, we acknowledge what they're doing. "Yes, I agree." "Oh yes, of course, of course." And this is normal! This is polite conversation, to not do so would be rude! And I went to a listening seminar recently where, um, I learned that -- behavioral patterns associated with listening that include affirmations really are judgments. And that we can't do that. If you want to be a good, effective listener, you just let the person talk and ultimately they figure it out for themselves. That's a very White school of thinking. [chuckles] If I applied that in my Italian family, it would-it would just be rude! You know, to go and not say "yes" or "I understand" or "well, maybe you should do this," right? Because, culturally these things are very different and, you know, we look at skin color or dress as a way to -- differentiate groups from each other. I don't think we look for similarities, I think we look to those things to differentiate. And-and I don't look different, um, and inside I am.